

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877



## 2013 STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

### "TOGETHER FOR CHRIST"

JANUARY 27-28, 2013  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
RICHLAND, MISSISSIPPI



JIM FUTRAL JUNIOR HILL MICHAEL CATT CHUCK KELLEY BOB PITMAN SAMMY GILBREATH KARA BLACKARD

## State Evangelism Conference kicks off Jan. 27

By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor

Familiar faces will abound as Mississippi Baptists gather at First Church, Richland, on Jan. 27-28 for the 2013 State Evangelism Conference, according to the organizer of the annual event.

"The speakers are people Mississippi Baptists know well. We will be blessed by their preaching," said Don Lum, evangelism director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) in Jackson.

Among the speakers scheduled for the conference are:

■ Kara Blackard, retired former pastor of Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth. "He has been a strong evangelistic voice in north Mississippi for his entire life, and a powerful preacher," Lum said.

■ Michael Catt, a Pascagoula native and senior pastor of Sherwood Church in Albany, Ga. Sherwood Productions, Inc., which is associated with the church, has produced such major-release Christian motion pictures as *Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof*, and *Courageous*.

"Michael and his church are on the cutting edge of reaching

Program/Schedule			
January 27		Monday Afternoon	
6:00 p.m.	Praise and worship Sammy Gilbreath Director of Evangelism, Alabama Convention	1:30-1:45 p.m.	Praise and worship Junior Hill Hartselle, Ala. (Junior Hill Ministries)
		1:45-2:30	Praise and worship Bob Pitman Muscle Shoals, Ala. (Bob Pitman Ministries)
		2:30-2:45	Praise and worship Chuck Kelley President, NOBTS New Orleans, La.
		2:45-3:30	Dinner provided Jim Futral Executive Director-Treasurer, MBCB
January 28		Monday Evening	
Monday Morning		6:15-6:30 p.m.	Praise and worship Michael Catt Sherwood BC Albany, Ga.
9:15-9:30 a.m.	Praise and worship	6:30-7:30	
9:30-9:40	Welcome		
9:40-10:25	Sammy Gilbreath Director of Evangelism, Alabama Convention		
10:25-10:40	Praise and worship		
10:40-11:30	Kara Blackard Pastor, Wheeler Grove BC Corinth		
11:30	Break for Lunch (on your own)		

the culture with the Gospel of Jesus Christ," Lum said. "His message will be timely and inspiring."

■ Jim Futral, MBCB executive director. "It's always an honor to have Jim Futral on the

program. Everyone appreciates his leadership and ability to call Mississippi Baptists to action with clarity and confidence," Lum said.

■ Sammy Gilbreath, director of evangelism for the State

Board of Missions of the Alabama Baptist Convention in Montgomery. "Sammy is well-known to Mississippi Baptists, having preached all over Mississippi for many years. He has also spoken and taught in a number of conferences in our state over the years."

■ Junior Hill, vocational evangelist from Hartselle, Ala. "Junior Hill is probably the best-known evangelist in Mississippi who is not from Mississippi. There's no way to count the number of people who have come to know Christ under his preaching and teaching. He will bless us with his message," Lum said.

■ Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Seminary. "Chuck Kelley is known and loved throughout the state. His spirited preaching and compassion for the lost in our state has made him a favorite son of Mississippi Baptists," Lum said.

■ Bob Pitman, dean of the Adrian Rogers Center for Biblical Preaching at Mid-America Seminary in Memphis, and retired longtime pastor of Kirby Woods Church in Memphis, who has preached in more than 900 revivals and conferences in the U.S. and internationally. "Mississippi Baptists

appreciate Bob Pitman's skill in opening the Bible and preaching in a way that leads people to understand the importance of following Jesus every day," Lum said.

There is no charge for the

see EVANGELISM on p. 7

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## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### Thoughts of Newtown

More words cannot begin to describe what occurred in Newtown, Ct., just a few days before Christmas. The deaths of 20 children and seven adults at the hands of a mad gunman are indescribable in human terms. As the state's governor, Dan Malloy, said, "Evil visited this community today."

Who can dispute that statement? Whatever the mental and emotional state of Adam Lanza, 20, at the time he entered Sandy Hook Elementary School and committed the second-worst school massacre in American history, evil was indeed present in Newtown that fateful day. (The worst school massacre in American history was a series of bombings and destruction by a disgruntled madman in Bath, Mi., in 1927 that claimed the lives of 58 children and six adults.)

There is nothing positive that can be said about the deliberate, inexplicable loss of so many innocent people. However, there are many important observations to be made in the aftermath of the tragedy. For one, America still has a soul.

The outpouring of love and sympathy and concern from around the country has been nothing short of amazing. At least for a little while, we stopped our often-selfish worldly pursuits long enough to reach out to the people and families so directly affected by the shootings. U.S. President Barack Obama ordered flags to half-staff. As far south as Jackson (Ms.), memorial services were held and bells were rung in the names of the victims.

People paused to think deeply about what had happened, and many reconsidered their strident positions and haughty pronouncements on the issues of the day that had been suddenly and involuntarily swept up in a senseless act of inhumanity. A lot of loose tongues developed the discipline to exercise a little more circumspection, at least temporarily.

Even Hollywood, a bastion of pornographic violence and moral rebellion that answers to no higher authority, was so repulsed that it pulled back for a short while to consider its own perverse contributions to a rapidly-worsening American culture that prompts such incidents.

However, the most notable and uplifting aspect of this exceedingly sad affair has been the spiritual reaction to what occurred in Newtown.

Normally, we are a nation that takes great pride in our burgeoning secularism and obsessive campaign to rid this country of any mention of Almighty God in any context. He has long been removed from schools, and there are a growing number of political and legal attempts to do away any statue or plaque or representation of any type in public places that would even suggest the existence of a loving and benevolent God who only wants the best for His highest creation.

While Americans daily indulge in the abundant riches of God's provisions, we take credit for those blessings and arrogate unto ourselves the glory that justly belongs to God. We are indeed a self-righteous and stiff-necked people (Deut. 9:6).

That is, self-righteous and stiff-necked until we are brought to our knees. Newtown did that to us. Faced with the monstrosity of the act and in realization of our own helplessness to prevent recurrences — especially to ourselves and our loved ones — we have decided to turn to God.

Among the first actions taken after the shootings were an almost universal call to prayer and the filling of churches both in the vicinity of Newtown and around the country. As we have watched the mournful funeral processions and faced our own mortality in a way we would prefer to avoid thinking about, once again our resort has been to run to God.

This is not meant to be a criticism. Indeed, our prayer should be that more people seeking answers to this tragedy will come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord, Savior, and Comforter (Matt. 5:4). He is, and will always remain, the Way.

Pray for the families who grieve even today. Pray for their broken-hearted community. Pray that God will be able to complete a mighty work in their lives. Pray that He will show them (and us) the way forward through these dark days, because only He can. Only He can.

## Manhood for our time



Guest opinion  
with Thomas White

In the wake of Kansas City Chiefs linebacker Jovan Belcher's murder of his pregnant girlfriend and subsequent suicide on Dec. 1, Fox Sports columnist Jason Whitlock wrote, "How many young people have to die senselessly? How many lives have to be ruined before we realize the right to bear arms doesn't protect us from a government equipped with stealth bombers, predator drones, tanks and nuclear weapons?"

Whitlock and many others have decided to blame guns for tragedies like this one. However, I don't hear the same outrage over alcohol when a drunk driver kills someone on the roads. Guns are not the problem. Kevin Powell, who appeared on the original season of MTV's *The Real World* series, came closer to the point, blaming a misguided culture of male bravado for the tragedy that occurred in Kansas City.

We've been trying to blame others for our actions ever since Genesis 3. Blaming others does not remove personal responsibility. It's about time that we stopped blaming others for our actions and took responsibility. Now, figuring out how men get to this point... that's a different discussion and perhaps one that can be useful around the family dinner table or in a church men's group.

I think the problem is a lack of proper biblical manhood. We live in a world that wants to remove gender differences, from the Easy Bake Oven to the Supreme Court. Anyone who has reared boys and girls knows that natural differences exist and in the case of my children, those differences emerge in almost every area of life.

I believe God created men and women equal, yet different. Instead of fighting against God's intended design, we should embrace the biblical model. We need to teach, foster, and encourage men to be biblical men.

What does this look like? Well here are a few talking points for further discussion:

■ A biblical man seeks God's will for his life and how he can best glorify God in relationships, occupation, and entertainment. He doesn't seek his own riches at the cost of others and use people for his own gain.

■ A biblical man intentionally looks for the woman God has for him, if God wants him to marry. Along the way, he leaves every woman better than he found her and treats each woman like his own sister. He

does not selfishly use women for what he wants or what temporary pleasure he may obtain, to throw them aside later.

■ A biblical man seeks to protect, provide for, and spiritually lead his family. He does not abandon them for his own happiness.

■ A biblical man takes responsibility for his actions, including rearing any children he fathers. The earthly father represents a shadow of the heavenly Father, who loves mankind enough to send His Son to die for our sins.

Earthly fathers should demonstrate unconditional, unselfish love toward children, protecting them and rearing them with consistency and intentionality.

■ A biblical man takes responsibility for his mistakes and does not look for the easy way out. He demonstrates integrity, honesty, and responsibility in his actions at home and in society.

Perhaps you can have a conversation with your children this evening at dinner about what type of manhood you want to model, what your son should strive to become, and the only type of guy your daughter should ever think about marrying.

As Deuteronomy 6:7 says, teach your children "when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." During this or the next tragedy, don't blame it on guns, sowing wild oats, or a culture of violence. Blame it on personal sin and the lack of true biblical manhood, then educate your own children to overcome the problem.

White is vice president for student services and communications at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth. This column first appeared at [thomaswhite.wordpress.com](http://thomaswhite.wordpress.com), was later re-posted at [TheologicalMatters.com](http://TheologicalMatters.com), and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press.

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# Report: Christians largest religious group in world

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — Christians are the world's largest religious group and are nearly evenly dispersed globally, according to a new Pew study on the size, geographic distribution, and median ages of the world's major religious groups.

Of the world's 6.9 billion people, 2.2 billion or 32% are Christians, Pew reported Dec. 18. While only 12% of Christians live in North America, the vast majority of Christians, 99%, live outside the Middle East-North Africa region where Christianity began.

Apart from North America, Christians are geographically dispersed, with 26% in Europe, 24% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 24% in sub-Saharan Africa, and 13% in the Asia-Pacific region, the study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found, based on 2010 data.

Researchers did not study the degree to which people actively practice their faiths, but relied on the subjects' self-identification of their religious affiliation.

The majority of the world's other religions lives in the Asia-Pacific region, including nearly all Buddhists and Hindus, and most Muslims and the religiously unaffiliated, researchers found. While 58.8% of the world's population lives in the Asia-Pacific region, it is home to 99% of Hindus and Buddhists, 62% of Muslims and 76% of the religiously unaffiliated.

Pew reported that the world's population includes 1.6 billion Muslims, one billion Hindus, nearly 500 million Buddhists, 400 million adherents of various folk and traditional religions, and 58 million adherents the study confined to the category of "other" comprised of many religions including Baha'i faith, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Taoism, and Wicca.

A plurality of the world's 14 million Jewish people, 44%, live in North America, while 41% live in the Middle East and North Africa, nearly all of them in Israel, the study found.

In the U.S., 78%, or 243,060,000 of the country's 310,390,000 people are Christian, the study found. The U.S. also has 50,980,000 religiously unaffiliated, 5,690,000 Jewish people, 3,570,000 Buddhists, 2,770,000 Muslims, 1,790,000 Hindus, 630,000 adherents to folk religions, and 1,900,000 affiliated with other religions.

The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010, encompasses more than 230 countries and territories. Based on more than 2,500 censuses, surveys, and population registers, the research is part of the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, analyzing religious change and its impact on societies around the world.

Globally, about half of all

Christians are Catholic. An estimated 37% of Christians are Protestant, including Anglican, independent, and nondenominational churches. The Orthodox Communion, including the Greek and Russian Orthodox, make up 12% of Christians.

Researchers categorized Christian Scientists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses as "viewing themselves as Christian," and computed them as comprising about one percent of the global Christian population.

Most of the world's population, 5.8 billion or 84%, affiliates with a particular religion, leaving 1.6 billion, or 16%, with no religious affiliation, the study found. However, many of those with no religious affiliation hold religious or spiritual beliefs, such as a belief in God or a universal spirit, while not identifying with a particular religion.

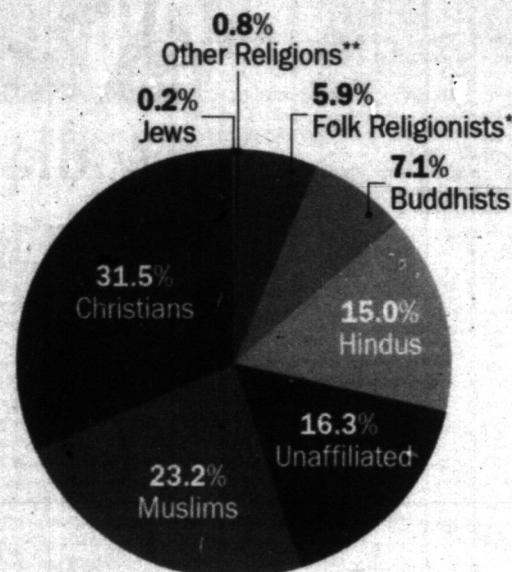
The study found that some religions have much younger populations, determined in part by the growth rate of countries where the religions are largely found. For example, religions concentrated in China tend to be older, because the population growth there is slower.

The median age of the world's overall population is 28, while the median age of Christians is 30, the study found.

The full report is available at <http://www.pewforum.org/global-religious-landscape-exec.aspx>

## Size of Major Religious Groups, 2010

Percentage of the global population



\*Includes followers of African traditional religions, Chinese folk religions, Native American religions and Australian Aboriginal religions.

\*\*Includes Baha'i, Jains, Sikhs, Shintoists, Taoists, followers of Tenrikyo, Wiccans, Zoroastrians and many other faiths.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Global Religious Landscape, December 2012

## Another pastor arrested as Iranian authorities step up persecution

**TEHRAN (BP and local reports)** — An American pastor of Iranian descent has been imprisoned in Iran on secret charges and tortured as the radical Islamist government pursues a crackdown on house churches.

Fox News reports that Saeed Abedini, a 32-year-old Iranian man who is a U.S. citizen, was detained while on a visit to see family members and conduct humanitarian work. Abedini, who lives in the United States with his wife and two children, previously spent years in Iran developing house churches.

"When he became a Christian, he became a criminal in his own country. His passion was to reach the people of Iran," Naghmeh, his wife, told Fox News.

Naghmeh explained that her husband once was a radical Muslim in training as a suicide bomber, but the training depressed him and he turned to Christ. "Christianity saved his life," she said.

According to International Christian Concern, an aid and advocacy organization for the persecuted church, Iran is in the midst of a crackdown on house churches.

Ahmed Shaheed, a United Nations special rapporteur (reporter) on human rights in Iran, told Reuters that the country has arbitrarily arrested and detained more than 300 Christians since 2010, including at least 41 people detained from a month to more than a

year. "Scores of other Christians appear to remain in detention for freely practicing their religion," he said.

Abedini started a network of clandestine house churches for Muslim converts to Christianity, spanning roughly 100 churches with more than 2,000 members. It's a movement Naghmeh told Fox News the Iranian government fears.

"They think if the country becomes more Christian, they are no longer under Islamic authority," she said. "That's why it's a threat."

Abedini's Iranian family members, all Muslim converts to Christianity, are under house arrest, Fox News reported. Abedini awaits trial in Iran's notorious Evin Prison, where he has been severely beaten both by prison guards and cellmates who self-identify as Al Qaeda members.

As a Muslim convert to Christianity, he could face the death penalty.

Abedini previously was arrested by Iranian authorities in 2009 but was released after signing an agreement to stop all official house church activities, according to Fox News. His family's attorneys have said he honored that agreement.

"He thought if he honored his part, they would honor theirs. He was transparent about his humanitarian work there," Tiffany Barrans, international

legal director at the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), which is representing Abedini's American family, told Fox News.

In an ACLJ news release, the organization announced a campaign calling on the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, and the U.S. Congress to demand Abedini's release.

"This is a very troubling pattern that we have seen inside Iran — Christian husbands and fathers who are punished for their religious beliefs," said Jordan Sekulow, ACLJ's executive director.

Abedini's detention comes as Iranian pastor Behnam Irani languishes in prison for "actions against the Islamic state."

According to a report by Christian Solidarity Worldwide, an organization that promotes religious freedom, Irani has been severely beaten by guards and inmates, causing acute stomach ulcers and colon complications that led to blood infection, severe bleeding, and weight loss.

Morning Star News, a Christian news service focusing on the persecuted church, reported that sources close to Irani say authorities intend to kill him by denying him medical treatment.

The prison scheduled a time for him to have surgery several months ago, but mysteriously this decision was reversed and he was not allowed to receive medi-

cal attention," Jason DeMars of Present Truth Ministries, an organization that seeks to bring the Gospel to Muslims and aid the persecuted Middle Eastern church, told Morning Star News.

"Those close to the case believe this is a deliberate attempt to bring about the conditions so that Pastor Behnam would die in prison as a result of his sickness," DeMars said.

According to Morning Star News, Irani was arrested in 2006 for "actions against national security" and handed a five-year suspended sentence, which a judge ordered him to serve in 2011 due to charges of leading a house church service.

The judge also labeled Irani an "apostate" from Islam, which could potentially lead to the death penalty.

In a letter released by Present Truth Ministries, Irani said he has learned more about extending the love of Christ while in prison. "Here, I live with cellmates that you can hardly see something positive in their lives and personalities," he wrote. "They don't think about anything but negative values, abhorrent acts, learning new experiences in crimes, and nasty literature."

"Immediately, I remember that Jesus Christ was sacrificed for their sins too. I become weary of myself for being unable to reflect this love to the darkness of my surroundings."

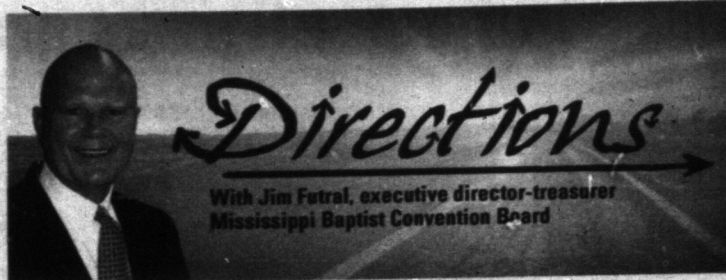


Here we stand in the early days of a New Year. There seems to be something magical, wonderful, and exciting about a New Year. I suppose we could celebrate the beginning of every new month, a new week, or even every day, but it probably would not be as exciting as a New Year. The New Year seems to be filled with new possibilities, new expectations, new achievements, new relationships, new understandings, and new adventures. No doubt for most of us some of those things will be present, but on the other hand some of the old things that battered, bruised, and bewildered us in the past will sneak into our future.

The problem with a New Year is that if everything stays just the same, the New Year will probably be the same as the old except for those things that are outside of our control that may shape, rearrange, or distort our lives. Here is the part of the mystery and the magic of a New Year. In order for it to be filled with new things, we have to be new. Many people will simply charge into this New Year with the same habits, attitudes, doubts, and frustrations with which they have lived year after year. They will attempt nothing new and nothing new will await them.

In this New Year, I want to suggest to you a simple and yet an amazing thing that you can do that will make a number of changes in your life — walk into the New Year. Some years ago here in our state there was an initiative that was promoted and pushed by the wife of our governor that was seen constantly on television and heard over the media. It was "Let's Go Walking, Mississippi." It was an encouragement toward better health and fewer pounds.

As you begin this New Year, I want to give you several places to walk. I want to encourage you to make a commitment to do something small, something



## Walk into the New Year

attainable. So often, people come to the New Year and look at resolutions as though they can achieve world class standing physically, mentally, emotionally, and even spiritually. Basically, they overload their wagon and after a few days or weeks they give up.

Let's walk into the New Year. Everyone can do it. Most people learn to walk around age one and even though in later years it may slow down you can still get around. Set a goal to do what you do and maybe a little bit more. In scripture, walking is more than just putting one foot in front of the other. In many places you will find that the Bible is talking about a spiritual exercise and that is what I am really focused on for you and me. There are three areas of walking that I want to suggest to you to put down in your heart and make them a daily adventure.

**Walk with God!** Wake up to Him and with Him. Before you charge out into this day to face your work, problems, decisions, or celebrations, look to the Lord, both inviting Him to walk with you and more importantly you focusing

on walking with Him. I know some folks who when they wake up in the morning their first thought is to check their Face-book. They want to check on family, friends, and any new thing that has gone on overnight. They just immediately rise and start running down the computer trails to begin their day. I want to encourage you to make that experience or any other secondary to the face time that you spend with God, the Father. When you meet with Him as you begin your day and invite Him to be a part of everything that you do, He will walk with you down every trail. It will make your day totally different and the beginning of your day much more meaningful. So walk with God day by day.

**Walk toward God!** Walking with God is predominantly a prayer event. Walking toward God is a scripture experience. The Bible is God's Word and it is His voice to our hearts. So in the beginning of your day, begin with the Word of God. For many of you, it is your practice to read through the Bible each year. That is a great experience, but for others of you reading the Bible is some-

thing new and different and you wonder where to begin and how much can you do. May I encourage you to start small rather than large. Instead of committing to read 10 to 15 chapters a day, read one chapter and meditate on what God is saying to you. You may read through the book of John or the Old Testament book of Proverbs letting God bring wonderful spirit-filled truth to your heart and at the same time filling your soul with practical advice from heaven. As you spend some time each morning in the Word of God, you will find that not only are you getting closer to God, but that you will have an increased appetite to want to hear what He has to say. As you open God's Word with your heart open to hear from Him, you will continue day by day moving closer to Him.

**Walk for God!** Ultimately, God wants to fill our lives with His plan, purpose, strength, and wisdom to send us out into the world to serve Him. There He wants us to be salt and light. Walking for God will mean that each day becomes both an experience and event where we are looking for that one moment to make a difference in another person's life. It may be an opportunity to lift someone, to love someone, or to listen to someone. Or it may be simply to react to someone or some situation in a different manner from 99% of the other people in our world. Instead of being fragile or fierce, we may be forgiving and friendly. Maybe out there on the trail of life and in the highways and byways, God will have an opportunity to use us. We will be walking for Him with the direction set and the days will come. Sometimes they will come very slowly and sometimes like gushers, but let every day find us walking with, toward, and for God.

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).

## College News



**WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** inducted 22 new members into its Alpha Chi National College Honor Society on December 19. Pictured is (front row, left to right) Telea Wade-La Hart, Raleigh, N.C.; Alyssa Keyes of Ringgold, Ga., secretary; Rachel Harris of Petal, vice-president; Torneka Williams, Monticello; (second row, left to right) Dolores O'Mary, administrative assistant for language and literature and Alpha Chi advisor; Read Diket, professor of art and education, director of Center for Creative Scholars, and Alpha Chi advisor; Katy Scott, Colorado Springs, Co.; Ester Belinda Lyon, Ellisville; Hannah Melancon, Eunice, La.; Abigail Good, Macon; Rachel Brown, Columbus; (third row, left to right) Randi Clark, Purvis; Bibhusha Pradhan, Kathmandu, Nepal; (back row, left to right) Aaron Crowley, Biloxi; Colton Lee, Poplarville; Randall Harris, associate professor of biology and Alpha Chi advisor; John "Jes" Sullivan, Petal; and Joseph Daniel Maqueda, Hattiesburg. Also inducted into Alpha Chi were (not pictured) Allyson Dunn, Waynesboro; Melody Gatlin, Ellisville; Hannah Goff, Vancleave; Melissa Johnson, Byram; Amber Jones, Huntsville, Ala.; Allison LeBoeuf, Collinsville, Okla.; Stella McIver, Columbia; Samantha Tucker, New Orleans, La.; and Dustin Warren, Wiggins.

## Staff Changes

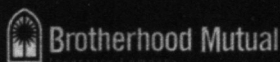


**DAMASCUS CHURCH, FLORA**, recently called Tray Earnhart as their new pastor. Tray is from Madison, and has been in pastoral ministry for the last 21 years serving churches in Mississippi, Wyoming, Missouri, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Earnhart is also the Headmaster at The Veritas School. His wife is Shay, from Lexington, and they have four children, Will (19), Tori (17), Nathan (13), and Jonathan (11).

## Revivals & Homecomings

► **Corinth Church, Heidelberg:** Revival, Jan. 20 - 23; Sun., 10 a.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Steve Stone, speaker; Jamie Matthews, pastor.





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## Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world.  
Whoever follows me will not walk  
in darkness but will have the  
light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer  
with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.  
(I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins  
and freedom from eternal  
death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose  
from the grave to forgive my sins  
and to restore my relationship  
with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ  
into my life. From this time on,  
I want to live in a loving relationship  
with Him. (I receive Christ as  
my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave  
the right to become children of God, even to  
those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a  
local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

## Just for the Record



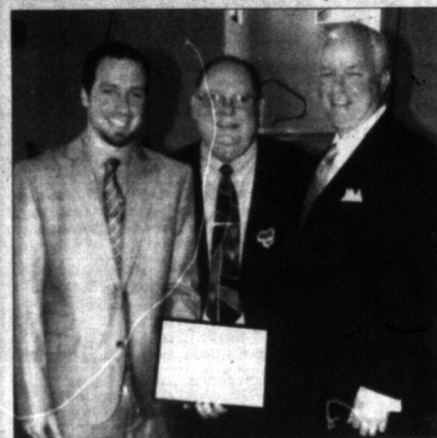
**GRACE UNITED CHURCH, DECATUR**, presented A Candlelight Christmas Dec. 16. Michelle Addy, director; Mark McDonald, pastor.

The WMU  
of **DESOTO  
CHURCH,  
CLARKE  
CITY**,

prepared  
fruit baskets  
for shut-  
ins. Shown  
are Louise  
Younger, V.  
ginia Pettis,  
Betty Manas-  
co, Barbara  
Manasco, and  
Gloria Pettis.



Calvary's  
Kids of  
**CALVARY  
CHURCH,  
SUMMIT**,  
presented  
the musical  
King Jesus  
Dec. 16. Ani-  
ta Alexander  
and Kenya  
Lofton,  
directors;  
Floyd Davis,  
pastor.



**FIRST CHURCH, VANCELEAVE**, licensed  
Matthew L. Welford to the gospel ministry Nov.  
25. Shown are Welford, pastor Don Boone Sr.,  
and Tim Welford.



**CONCORD CHURCH, BENTON-TIPPAH  
ASSOCIATION**, conducted a baby blessing  
and parent dedication for T.J. and Lisa Pannell  
and baby Olivia Oct. 28. Robert E. Walker, pastor.

# D.C. appeals panel delivers first blow to contraception mandate

**WASHINGTON (BP and local reports)** — A federal appeals court has delivered an important victory to religious nonprofit organizations that oppose the Obama administration's abortion/contraception mandate.

In the first ruling on the mandate at the appellate level, the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the federal government Dec. 18 to keep its promise to issue a new rule to protect the religious liberty of two colleges and other religious nonprofits. The three-judge panel told the Obama administration to report back every 60 days on its commitment to publish a notice of a proposed rule by March 31 and to issue a final rule before August.

The D.C. Circuit Court, considered by many legal scholars to be the most influential court in the federal appellate system due to the nature of the cases it hears, also said it expected the administration to fulfill its pledge not to enforce the current rule against Wheaton College, an evangelical Christian school in suburban Chicago, and Belmont Abbey College, a Roman Catholic institution in North Carolina, as well as other religious nonprofits.

"We take the government at its word and will hold it to it," the panel said in its three-page order.

The appeals court issued the order in response to lawsuits by Wheaton and Belmont Abbey against a rule by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that mandates employers provide workers with health insurance covering contraceptives and abortion-causing drugs.

The rule is part of the implementation of the 2010 health

care reform law, which has been dubbed Obamacare.

The abortion/contraception mandate went into effect Aug. 1 of this year, but the Obama administration established a "one-year safe harbor" from that date intended to accommodate the concerns of nonprofit religious entities. Neither the "safe harbor" nor the D.C. Circuit Court's order applies to for-profit companies with owners opposed to the mandate.

Religious freedom advocates praised the court's order. Richard Land, executive director of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, called it "a tremendous day for religious freedom and freedom of conscience," adding he was "extremely pleased but not surprised" at the court's action.

"It shows clearly that when the federal government oversteps its bounds and denies the First Amendment free exercise and freedom of conscience rights of Americans that those citizens can successfully appeal to the federal court system to be the protector of those divinely endowed and constitutionally guaranteed rights," said Land.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission signed on to a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of Wheaton and Belmont Abbey, joining 10 other evangelical organizations in the brief filed by Christian Legal Society in support of the appeals by Wheaton and Belmont Abbey on religious liberty grounds.

Kyle Duncan, general counsel of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, said the court "has now made it clear that government promises and press conferences are not enough to protect reli-

gious freedom. The court is not going to let the government slide by on non-binding promises to fix the problem down the road."

The D.C. Circuit Court's order came only four days after Duncan and government lawyers presented oral arguments before the panel of judges. During the arguments, the Obama administration lawyers promised the judges the government would not enforce the current rule against religious nonprofits and would provide a new rule to guard their religious freedom.

Wheaton and Belmont Abbey appealed to the D.C. Circuit Court after federal judges dismissed their lawsuits separately, partly because they ruled neither school had standing to sue. The appeals court, however, ruled the schools had standing. The three-judge panel also decided not to return the cases to the federal judges for further action but to hold them until a new rule is issued.

## BIBL i O C I P H E R

Y SECOXES YS XCCA SC PEG L SEG

PYXHP WHA LCHAGDP SEWS SEG EYXE

XCA EWSE LDCOXES SCLWDA UG.

AWHYGR KCOD: SLC

Clue: S = T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Isaiah Forty: Eight

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004. © 2005

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

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## Correction:

► In a page three article in the Dec. 20 issue of The Baptist Record, a reporter incorrectly listed the church membership of WMU Executive Director Kay Cassibry. Cassibry is a member of Highland Colony Church, Ridgeland. The Baptist Record regrets the error.

## MS POSITIONS

**COUNTY LINE BAPTIST CHURCH, OVETT IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR.** We are 24 miles south of Laurel and 25 miles east of Hattiesburg. Resumes may be sent to Pastor Search Committee, 152 Herman Phillips Road, Ovett, MS 39464.

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**IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH, NATCHEZ, MS, IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A FULL TIME PASTOR.** Please mail resumes/ape to Immanuel Baptist Church 684 Hwy 61 North Natchez, Ms. 39120 At: Pastor Search Committee

## CLASSIFIEDS

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## Restoring the Repentant • Hosea 13: 4-6; 14:1-9

As we discuss the last lesson in our study of the book of Hosea, I want to draw our attention to the title of our study. We have been studying "The Heart of a Redeeming Father." The theme of redemption is woven into every verse of Hosea. God is pursuing His people with a heart of compassion, even though they have rejected Him and adopted a lifestyle of idol worship. He is giving them a chance to start their life anew. Most adults have made the statement, "If I could just start over." We have all had times when we would just like to have another chance. Our lesson today is exactly what we need to hear. God is opening the door of repentance for our chance to begin again, fresh and new.

### Need of Repentance (Hosea 13: 4-6)

The fact of God's condemnation of the Israelites' idolatry and sinfulness is again stated in Hosea 13: 1-3. Also we find that He has promised to punish them for their unfaithfulness to Him in Hosea 13: 7-16. In Hosea 13: 4-6, God reminds the people that He alone has always been their God and Savior. Ever since their time in Egypt, He had been the one who had provided for all their needs, yet still they had forsaken Him and followed their own prideful ways

of self-satisfaction. What we are seeing here is God leading His people to see their need to repent. Recognizing that they had sinned was only the first step in being restored into a right relationship with their Heavenly father. Repentance of that sin must follow. We all must recognize our need to repent. You can feel sorry for your transgressions, and keep those feelings hidden. It is only through verbal confession of those feelings to God that restoration can start.

### Call to Repentance (Hosea 14: 1-3)

In Hosea 14:1, God very plainly calls His people to return to Him. In 14: 2 He even tells them what to say: "Forgive all our sin and accept what is good, so we may repay You with praise from our lips." (HCSB) How simple God makes things for us. Even though we turn our backs on Him and follow after our own desires, He waits patiently for us to hear His gentle call and to return to Him. And when we re-



### Explore the Bible with Huey Dedmon

turn, He opens His loving arms to us and accepts us and restores us to a right relationship with Him. Though it may seem simple, we make it hard because we resist and refuse to humble ourselves before Him. While God is willing to restore our relationship with Him, He will not unless we come to Him with a sincere prayer of repentance.

### Results of Repentance (Hosea 14: 4-8)

When we come to God with a sincere prayer of repentance, we experience His love, healing, and renewal. This is the promise that God made with His people. In Hosea 2: 14-23, we saw this promise displayed early in our study. Throughout history God has stood ready to forgive His children of their unfaithfulness. Not only in the past, but even now God stands ready to open His arms to anyone who will repent of their sinfulness and accept His love for them. The result of our repentance is a fresh

start in our relationship with our Heavenly Father. He lovingly forgives us and restores us. He takes away our need to depend on anything else but Him.

### Wisdom of Repentance (Hosea 14: 9)

Hosea ends his prophecy with an incredible call to God's people to live wisely. "Let whoever is wise understand these things, and whoever is insightful recognize them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them." (Hosea 14: 9 HCSB) Hosea is calling us to pay attention! God has a plan for our lives. The wise understand and recognize His ways are right. Those who are righteous walk in God's ways, but God's ways are stumbling blocks to the proud and rebellious in spirit.

Our lesson this week has shown us that God stands ready to restore our relationship with Him if we will sincerely come to Him with a repentant heart. Many try to make a fresh start in life, but the only real fresh start comes when we confess our sin before God and experience true forgiveness.

Dedmon is Associate Pastor for Education/Outreach at Brandon Church, Brandon.

## Nahum: A Message of God's Judgment • Nahum 1:1-3:19

"Behold, I am against you, declares the Lord of Hosts." That is not the sentence I would prefer to hear from the Lord through His prophet concerning my lifestyle and personal relationship with Him. Twice in the book of Nahum, that is exactly what the Lord declared against the nation of Assyria in general and the capital city of Nineveh in particular. If you go to Nineveh today, you have to visit with a shovel and a trowel, the tools of an archaeologist. As we remember from our December lessons, YAHWEH keeps His promises. If the Lord is for us, who can stand against us? If the Lord is against us, who can stand for us?

The possible date for the writing of this book is 600BC. The greatness of Assyria was beginning to wane. Approximately 150 years before Nahum spoke this word of poetic prophetic doom against Nineveh, Jonah had (reluctantly) walked every inch of that city preaching, "Repent or perish!" We left Jonah sitting under a shady vine on the outskirts of Nineveh. He was praying that he could just die on the spot rather than bear the awful thought that these people were going to repent and be spared. This evil city which had inflicted so much pain on God's people would get off scot (grace and mercy) free. Unthinkable!

Jonah's shady vine wilted and the

Ninevites bloomed. Apparently their repentance was short-lived for now Nahum plainly preaches their imminent destruction. Assyria began to crumble as a world power in the 600BC era. They had conquered and taken the northern Kingdom of Israel captive in 722BC. They had troubled the Southern Kingdom of Judah as well.

Now, this unrepentant city was coming under the judgment of God. This destroyer was about to be destroyed by their Creator. In 612 BC, the Assyrians were defeated by the Babylonians.

One of my favorite titles for this 47-verse book of Nahum is "Jonah Gets His Wish." By sparing Nineveh the first time around, God proved that destruction is not His first preference. First, God shows people how to live. He walks with them. He calls them back when they stray. He gives them opportunity after opportunity to stop, look, repent and live. After continual rejection, His

holiness calls Him to act for the sake of His Name. The Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, whether people or nations.

The name "Nahum" means comfort. Finding comfort in the lines of the writings of Nahum would be like finding a needle in a haystack. You can read these three little chapters in just a few minutes. Immediately, you will shake your head and exclaim, "Wow. These were some really evil folks."

Nahum's descriptive language leaves no stone unturned as to just how cruel the Assyrians could be in their treatment of enemies. Their power was nothing compared to the strength of God.

Nineveh is devastated. No one will even be left to grieve the loss. Your wound is incurable. There is no relief for you. This book ends exactly like the book of Jonah. God is the One left standing with all the right answers. He is the only one qualified to ask the questions.

### Bible Studies for Life with Becky Brown



Those individuals and/or nations which stand against God and the truths found in His Word will perish. I pray that you are astute enough to surmise and then agree that our own beloved America is rushing headlong into a confrontation with a Holy God who cannot tolerate sin forever. We cannot blame our nation or our elected leaders for our personal shortfalls into sin. We must first look deeply into our own hearts and align our lives with the life God has marked out for those who believe in Jesus and determine to walk with Him and learn from Him.

For the month of January 2013 we will be looking at the messages of four of the twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament. I call them the Twelve Last Words: Majoring on the Minors. In the Hebrew scriptures they are considered as one scroll together. They are not called "minor" because their messages are less important than those called the "major" prophets. The word "minor" has nothing to do with depth of the messages. It has everything to do with the length and word count of these writings.

Judah, how do you spell comfort? N-a-h-u-m.

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.

## EVANGELISM

cont. from p. 1

conference, Lum pointed out. "It is open to lay people as well as pastors, ministers, and church staffers. We welcome

everyone to be a part of this conference."

A Jan. 28 evening meal will be provided at no charge by MBCB and First Church, Richland, in the Richland Community Center near the church, beginning at 4:30 p.m. Jim Futral

will provide the message.

The Richland Community Center, which is being utilized to ensure adequate seating, is located directly behind the Richland Wal-Mart which fronts U.S. Highway 49.

"First Church, Richland, has

been a wonderful host. This is the church's first time to host the State Evangelism Conference, and they have gone out of their way to make it a success," Lum said.

The annual State Evangelism Conference is a ministry

of the Mississippi Cooperative Program. For more information, contact Lum at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3278, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 278. E-mail: jellis@mbcb.org.

## Just for the Record



**BUNKER HILL CHURCH, COLUMBIA**, presented The Secret of Snowflake County Dec. 16. Sissy Wilks, Carmen Duncan, and Becky Wilks, leaders.



The youth of **CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, had a progressive supper as they Christmas party, visiting three homes.

**LEXIE CHURCH, TYLER-TOWN**, ordained Don Mixon and Ray Dunnam as deacons Dec. 2. Shown are Dunnam, pastor Buddy Day, Ronnie Johnson, and Mixon.



### In other Church News:

► **Corinth Church, Heidelberg**, will host the gospel group The Revelations Jan. 19, 6 p.m. Love offering.

► **First Church, Ovett**, will host a Festival of International Cuisine Jan. 12, 6:30 p.m., with dishes to taste from various countries along with information about missions activities in each region. Glen Jones, pastor.

► The youth and Wednesday night meal team of **Slayden Church, Marshall Association**, sponsored a community-wide Thanksgiving dinner Oct. 17, with approximately 300 attending. Coordinators were Brian Ross and Pam Fletcher. Rusiy Fair, pastor.

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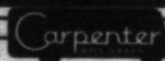
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The children's choir of **GOODWATER CHURCH, MEEHAN**, presented The Secret of Snowflake County Dec. 2.

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17



**Johnny Hunt**  
Pastor  
First Baptist Church  
Woodstock, GA



**Phil Hoskins**  
Pastor  
Higher Ground Baptist Church  
Kingsport, TN



**Junior Hill**  
Evangelist  
Hartselle, AL



**This Hope**  
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